

## **THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE OF BENAKI MUSEUM**

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### **Abstract**

**The Photographic Archive of Benaki Museum was founded in 1973. Its fundamental aim was the collection of photographs that portrayed monuments of the Byzantine period. Later its character changed and nowadays its aim is the collection, documentation, conservation and digitisation of photographic evidences from all the period of Greek history and all regions of Greek territory. The collection of the Photographic Archive constitutes of negatives and photographs of the 19th and 20th century. The original material is stored in files and boxes of museum specifications, in a specially designed area with controlled temperature and humidity. The fast growth of technology and the continuously increase of the collection, that today numbers 500.000 negatives, imposed in the Photographic Archive to use the digital technology. Thus it was judged necessary to start working more on the electronic documentation and digitisation of its collections. From 2003, via the operational program "Information Society" of Community Support Framework, 10% of the collection of the Photographic Archive was documented and digitised in the database named MuseumPlus.**

### **THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE IN THE EARLY YEARS**

The idea of the foundation of the Photographic Archive as a separate department of Benaki Museum belongs to Aimilia Yeroulanou. It was founded in 1973 for the purpose of collecting, storing and classifying photographs and works of art belonging to the Byzantine and Post-byzantine period. Over the years its initial scope has expanded and nowadays its aim is the collection, documentation, conservation and

digitisation of photographic evidences from all the period of Greek history and all regions of Greek territory.

The early years, the collection of the archive was separated into two units, the monuments (from which became a topographic choice of subjects) and the objects (which were separated per type). The selected subjects were printed and glued in cards (where it was written the place and time that the photograph was taken, name of photographer, subject, number of the negative). Afterwards, they were placed in folders in order to be easily accessible by the public for their study.

The collection of the Photographic Archive constitutes of negatives and photographs of the 19th and 20th century. “The Department includes photographs depicting traditional trades, customs, and agricultural practices, the Occupation and post-war periods, social and cultural events, antiquities, Byzantine churches, neo-classical and traditional architecture and urban settlements.” The original material is stored in files and boxes of museum specifications, in a specially designed area with controlled temperature and humidity. Some characteristic names of professionals and amateurs photographers whose archives belong to the Photographic Archive are James Robertson, Nelly's, Voula Papaioannou, Dimitris Harissiadis, Nikolaos Tombazis, Pericles Papachatzidakis, Georgios Rizos, Rena Andreadi, Stephanos Malikopoulos, Loukas Benakis, Ioannis Charamis, Laskarina Boura, Maria Zagorisiou, Elli Papadimitriou, Ioannis Labrou, Konstantinos Georgiadis and others.

## **THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE TODAY**

The fast growth of technology and the continuously increase of the collection, that today numbers 500.000 negatives, imposed in the Photographic Archive to use the digital technology. Thus it was judged necessary to start working more on the electronic documentation and digitisation of its collections. At first, the documentation of the photographic material belonging to the photographic department was taking place on access databases that were created from its curators.

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αριθ	αριθ	αριθμός	ονομασία αντικ	μόνη αποθηκε	Τίτλος	Περιγραφή	Χρόνος Φωτ	Τόπος Φωτογραφικής Λήψης	
ΦΑ	1	1	φωτογραφικό τύπωμα	XV.1/19ος.Κ.1	No.93, Athenes, 1851. Acropole	Η νοτιοανατολική πλευρά της Ακρόπολης και η γύρω περιοχή.	19ος: 1851	Νοτιοανατολική Ευρώπη: Ελλάδα: Στερεά: Αττική: Αθήνα	χαρι
ΦΑ	1	10	φωτογραφικό τύπωμα	XV.1/19ος.Κ.1	[Athenes, Le Parthenon], 1851	Η δυτική πλευρά του Παρθενώνα.	19ος: 1851	Νοτιοανατολική Ευρώπη: Ελλάδα: Στερεά: Αττική: Αθήνα	χαρι
ΦΑ	1	100	φωτογραφικό τύπωμα	XV.6/19ος.Κ.1		Άποψη του Θησείου από νοτιοδυτικά.	19ος: 1853-1854	Νοτιοανατολική Ευρώπη: Ελλάδα: Στερεά: Αττική: Αθήνα	χαρι
ΦΑ	1	1000	φωτογραφικό τύπωμα	X.5/19ος.Κ.41		Δρόμος.	19ος: 1895 περίπου	Ασία: Ρωσία	χαρι
ΦΑ	1	1001	φωτογραφικό τύπωμα	X.5/19ος.Κ.41	[...] No 15.	Δρόμος. Οδός Σβετλάνας.	19ος: 1895 περίπου	Ασία: Ρωσία	χαρι
ΦΑ	1	1002	φωτογραφικό τύπωμα	X.5/19ος.Κ.41		Λιμάνι ρώσικης πόλης (Vladivostok). Βάρκες δεμένες σε προβλήτια.	19ος: 1895 περίπου	Ασία: Ρωσία	χαρι
ΦΑ	1	1003	φωτογραφικό τύπωμα	X.5/19ος.Κ.41	[...] No 16.	Κινέζικη αγορά. Παζάρι σε ρώσικη πόλη (Vladivostok).	19ος: 1895 περίπου	Ασία: Ρωσία	χαρι
ΦΑ	1	1004	φωτογραφικό τύπωμα	X.5/19ος.Κ.41		Κινέζοι χαμάληδες.	19ος: 1895 περίπου	Ασία: Ρωσία	χαρι
ΦΑ	1	1005	φωτογραφικό τύπωμα	X.5/19ος.Κ.41		Κινέζικη αγορά σε ρώσικη πόλη.	19ος: 1895 περίπου	Ασία: Ρωσία	χαρι
ΦΑ	1	1006	φωτογραφικό τύπωμα	X.5/19ος.Κ.41		Κινέζος χαμάλης.	19ος: 1895 περίπου	Ασία: Ρωσία	χαρι

### 1. Access Database

From 2003, via the operational program "Information Society" of Community Support Framework, 10% of the collection of the Photographic Archive was documented and digitised in the database named MuseumPlus. All the existing electronic documented photographic material that was created in to access databases had to be modified in order to be transferred correctly to the new database.

For the proper documentation of the photographs and negatives, research had been done on the contact cards of the negatives and photographs and the catalogues of the Photographic Archive, the thesaurus of locations where the photographs had been taken (which was made by the Information Technology Department of Benaki Museum), the copyrights' documents, internet and relative bibliography.

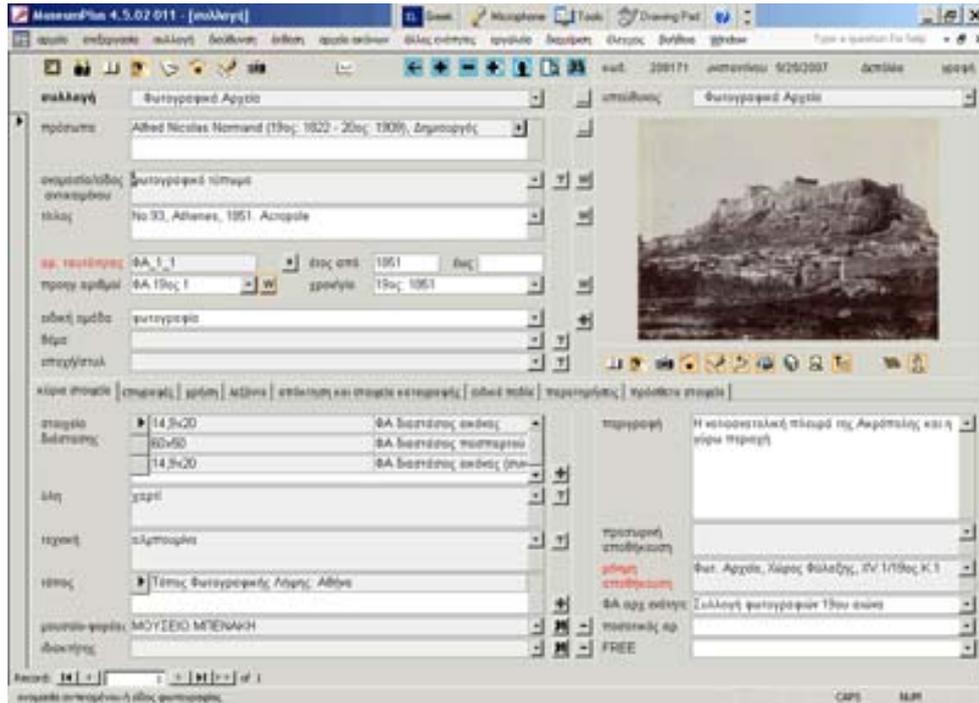
New fields were added to the existing records according to the decisions that were made after a lot of meetings between the curators of the Photographic Archive, the Information Technology Department of Benaki Museum and the creators of the MuseumPlus Database. This database was adjusted to the needs of Benaki Museum

and each department's separately. The previous numbers were kept and it was created a unique identity number for every record that was added to the MuseumPlus Database.

The fields, that were created, cover the basic documentation of the picture (for example, number of identity, photographer, subject, place and chronology) and her natural description (photographic type, material, technique, dimensions etc). Also, after a lot of research thesauruses of established terms were created (geographic terms, main names etc). In order the documentation to be complete, more tables were added concerning the conservation, exhibitions, the biography of each photographer and bibliography. Finally, it was added a digital copy of the photograph (which was achieved via photographing or scanning). This copy is accompanied by information on the time of production, the analysis of picture, depth of colours etc.

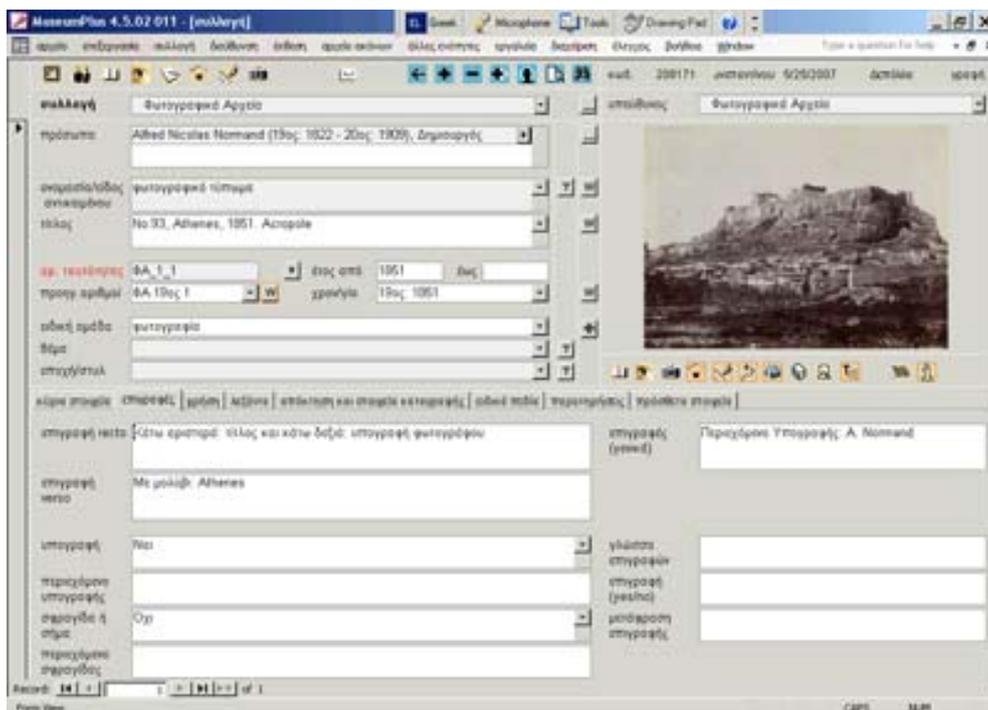
In the Main Module named "Collection" have been created fields concerning the name of the photographer, depicted person(s) (if any), the photographic type, the title given from the photographer (if any), the unique identity number of this record, it's previous cataloguing number(s), the date that the photograph was taken, the subject etc.

In the Tab "Basic data" have been created fields concerning the dimensions (of the photograph, negative, passe-partout etc), photographic material, technique, the location where the photographs had been taken, the name of the museum, description, temporary and permanent location of the object on the institution and the archival unit that this record belongs to.



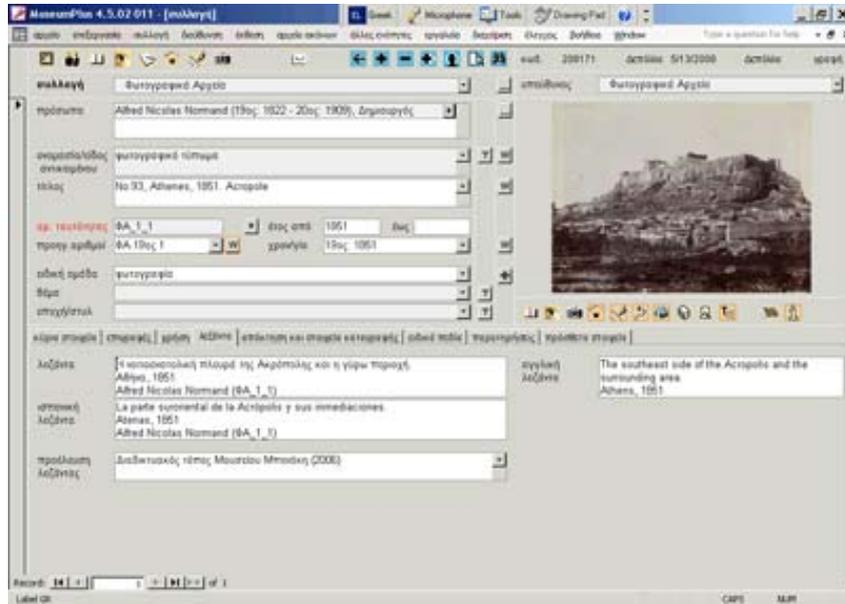
2. Main Module and Tab “Basic Data”

In the Tab “Inscriptions” have been created fields concerning the inscriptions (verso or recto), stamps and signatures that the photograph or negative might have, their language and their translation.



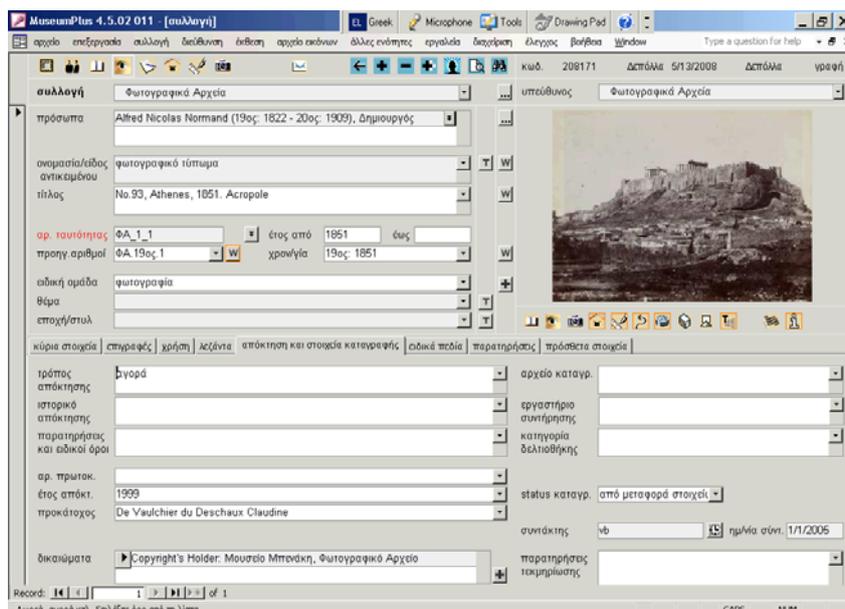
3. Main Module and Tab “Inscriptions”

In the Tab “Caption” have been created fields concerning the Greek, English and Spanish captions that have given to the photographic elements and their usage.



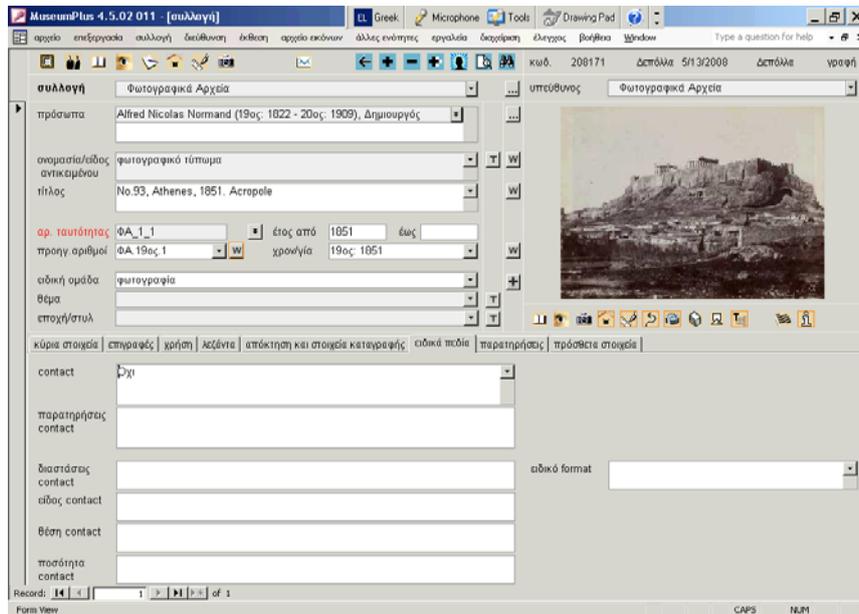
4. Main Module and Tab “Caption”

In the Tab “Acquisition and record data” have been created fields concerning the acquisition method, acquisition history, acquisition documentation comments and special terms, protocol number, acquisition year, previous owner, the copyrights’ holder etc.



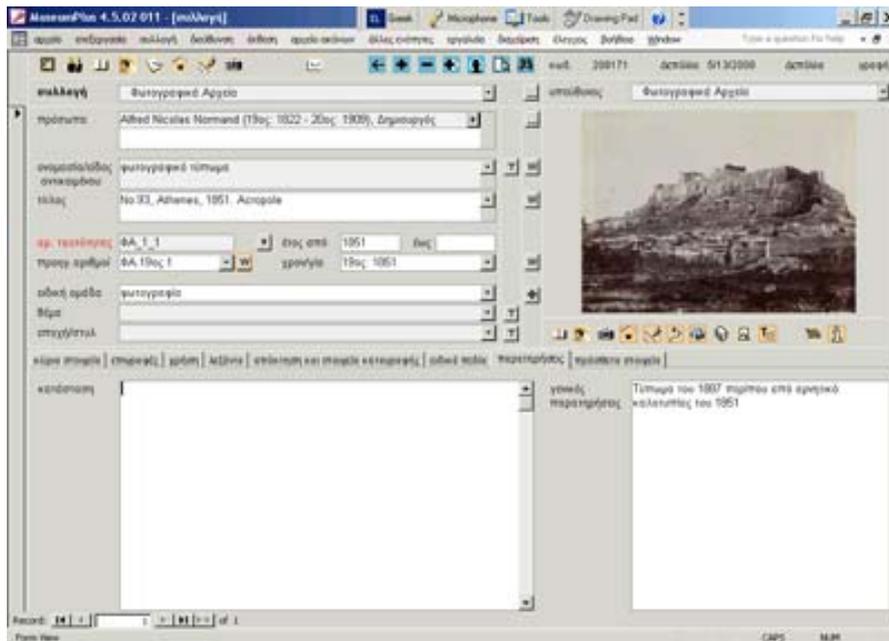
5. Main Module and Tab “Acquisition and record data”

In the Tab “Special Fields” have been created fields concerning the contacts (remarks, dimensions, type, location and quantity) and the format type (for example carte de visite, boudoir, salon etc.)



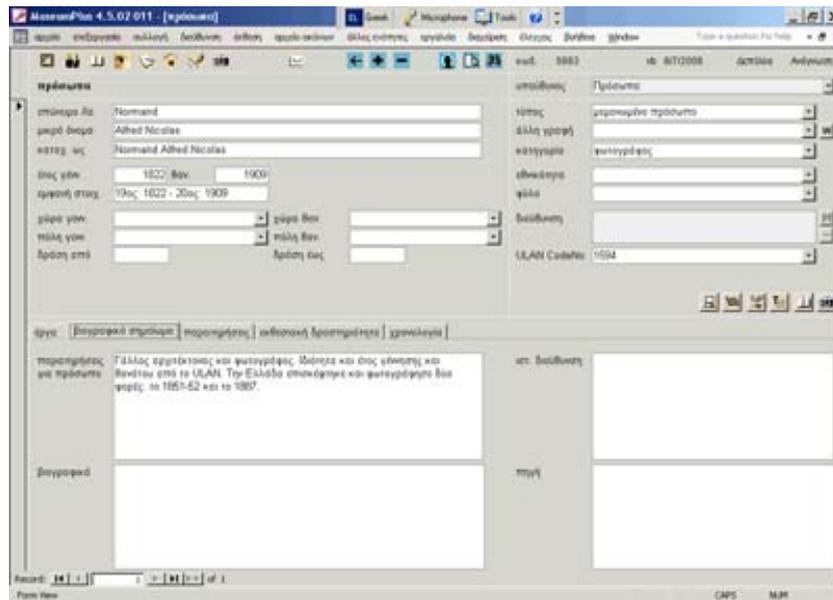
6. Main Module and Tab “Special Fields”

In the Tab “Comments” have been created two fields about all the remarks that a curator can add.



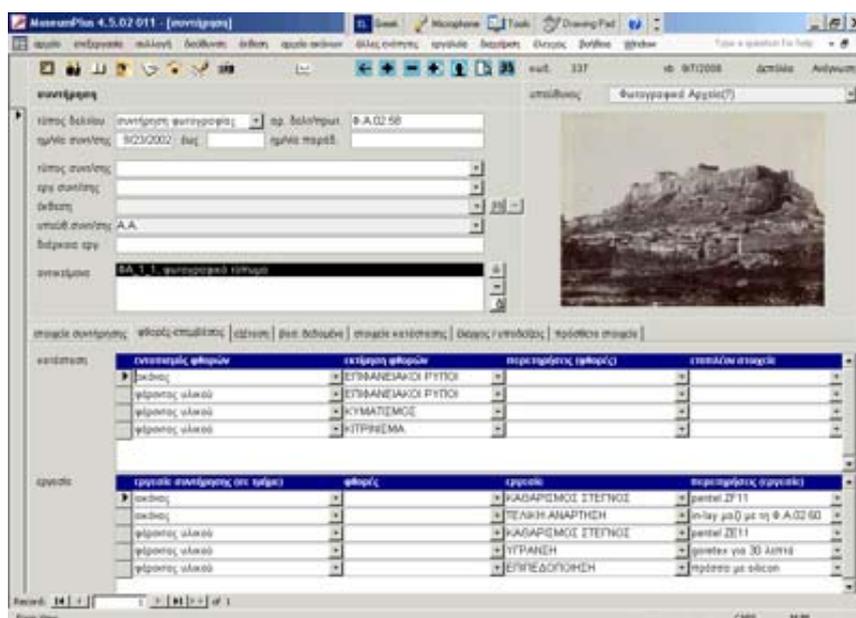
7. Main Module and Tab “Comments”





10. Person Module (2)

The conservation laboratory works on the restoration of the physical and chemical degradations the material has undergone and on his preventive conservation. A Conservation Module has been created that includes fields concerning the original retouching, protective coating, ph tests, the abrasions, tears, water stains, micro-organisms etc that a negative or photograph might have and all the necessary actions that have been taken.

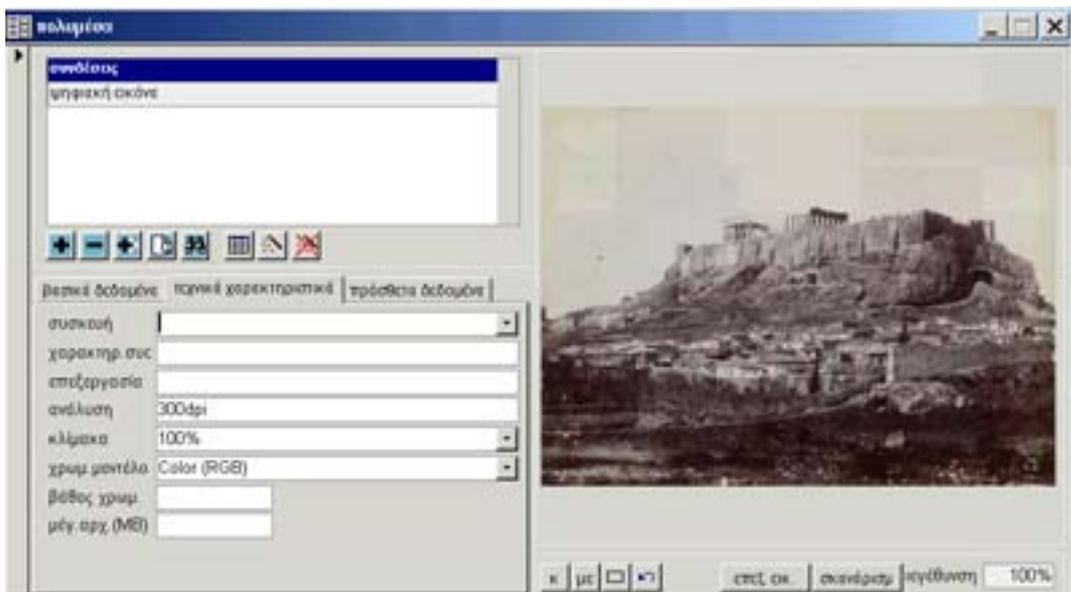


11. Conservation Module

In the Multimedia Module have been created fields concerning the quality of the digital photograph, the date that it was produced, the name of the digital picture, the photographic camera or scanner that it was used, the size of the file, analysis of picture, depth of colours etc.



12. Multimedia Module (1)



13. Multimedia Module (2)

The future aim of the Photographic Archive is to complete electronic documentation and digitisation of a bigger percentage of photographic evidences that belong to Benaki Museum and to present a selection of photographs via its page on the internet. Finally, a free usage of a read-only version of the MuseumPlus Database from every researcher that visits the Photographic Archive is on its future goals in order to achieve a more essential communication with its public.

## **REFERENCES**

1. [www.benaki.gr](http://www.benaki.gr)